

Appl. No. 10/044,256

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of making a granola or snack-food product, comprising:
 - a. mixing ingredients consisting essentially of dry mix ingredients for said granola or snack-food product with a liquid binder to obtain a formable mixture, wherein the mixing is carried out at an elevated temperature and the binder is a liquid at said elevated temperature, said binder consisting essentially of less than about 6% by weight water and at least about 94% by weight sugar, and wherein the binder sets when cooled to room temperature;
 - b. forming the mixture into a product precursor, wherein the forming is carried out at elevated temperature and while the binder is still liquid; and
 - c. cooling the precursor to set the binder, thereby obtaining the snack-food product.
2. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the binder is a sugar solution which is liquid at elevated temperature and which sets when cooled below about 40 degrees C.
3. (Original) The method of Claim 2, wherein the elevated temperature is at least about 60 degrees C.
4. (Canceled)
5. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the binder is sugar is a sugar solution having a sugar concentration of up to about 99%.

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6. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein the binder comprises at least one sugar selected from the group consisting of maltose, saccharose, galactose, fructose and glucose.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 1, comprising obtaining the binder by:

dissolving a mixture of at least one sugar selected from the group consisting of maltose, saccharose, galactose, fructose and glucose in water to form an aqueous sugar solution; and

heating the aqueous sugar solution to evaporate water from the solution and concentrate the sugar or sugars therein;

wherein a binder is obtained which is a liquid at an elevated temperature and which sets when cooled to room temperature.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the ingredients for the product comprise at least one ingredient selected from the group consisting of nuts, fruit, dried fruit, cereals, and cereal products.

9. (Currently Amended) A method of making a granola or snack-food product, comprising:

a. at a temperature of about 90 degrees C or higher, mixing dry mix ingredients for the granola or snack-food product with a fat-free liquid binder to obtain a formable mixture, wherein said liquid binder is a sugar solution consisting essentially of less than about 6% by weight water and at least about 94% by weight sugar, and wherein said binder is a liquid at about 90 degrees C and sets when cooled to room temperature;

b. at about 90 degrees C or higher, while the binder is still liquid, forming the mixture into a product precursor; and

c. cooling the precursor to set the binder, thereby obtaining the granola or snack-food product.

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10. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 9, comprising mixing the ingredients at a temperature of about 100 degrees C or higher.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 9, comprising forming the product precursor at about 100 degrees C or higher.

12. (Currently Amended) A method of binding ingredients in a granola or snack-food product, comprising:

obtaining, at an elevated temperature, a liquid form of a binder consisting essentially of less than about 6% by weight water and at least about 94% by weight sugar;

combining ingredients consisting essentially of dry mix ingredients for the product with the liquid form of the binder to obtain a mixture of ingredients plus binder at elevated temperature;

moulding or otherwise forming the mixture or a portion of the mixture into one or more product precursors; and

allowing the binder to cool to a reduced temperature;

wherein the binder is in a liquid state at elevated temperature and sets upon cooling to the reduced temperature into a solid state which is substantially dry and non-sticky to the touch.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 12, comprising obtaining the binder by:

heating an aqueous solution of one or more sugars to reduce the water content of the solution and thereby obtain a binder which is liquid at temperatures above about 100° C and sets when cooled to temperatures below about 60° C.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 12 wherein the binder is a liquid at temperatures above about 90° C and sets at temperatures below about 70° C.

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15. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 12 wherein the binder is a sugar solution with a sugar concentration of about 98% by weight.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 12, comprising forming the mixture, at said elevated temperature, into snack-food product precursors which are approximately the size and shape of the eventual cooled snack-food product.

17. (Currently Amended) A method of making a granola or snack-food product, comprising:

a. at a temperature of about 90 degrees C or higher, mixing dry mix ingredients for the granola or snack-food products with a fat-free liquid binder to obtain a formable mixture, wherein said liquid binder comprising is a sugar solution consisting essentially of less than about 6% by weight water and at least about 94% by weight sugar, and wherein said binder is a liquid at about 90 degrees C and sets when cooled to room temperature;

b. at about 90 degrees C or higher, while the binder is still liquid, cutting the mixture into a plurality of product precursors; and

c. cooling the precursors to set the binder, thereby obtaining the granola or snack-food products.